Communication Management in Organizations. A Case of Private Companies in Western Romania

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Abstract
Communication is a cultural expression. Behaviour in organizations is the result of social mentalities. Organizational culture is directly proportional to the level of communication. Optimal management strategies take account of institutional communication, social values and collective representations. Strategic communicative methods are needed to support the development of effective managers at all levels of business.
Keywords: managerial communication, organizational culture, mentalities

Introduction

The act of management was one of the oldest forms of work organization within human society. If initially management meant to impose one's will and to administer some goods according to subjective rules and regulations, managing nowadays involves influencing the work of subordinates to achieve success in an activity (management is an art). As science it requires to comply with certain laws and theories to achieve a predetermined purpose M. Zlate, C. Zlate (1982). In addition, to the explicit text of management and leading, there is an institutional context transposed in the internal environment of the

organization that reflects the culture of the organization. Gerald Cole defines organizational culture as "the dominant pattern of beliefs and values held by the organization" (Cole, 2004). Gheorghe Ionescu gives a comprehensive definition of the term, describing it as a "system of values, symbols, rituals and practices" supported by members of the organization (2001). Culture becomes an analogous perception to all levels of the organization, this aspect constituting the "shared aspect of culture" (Ibid). Moreover, the concept of *organizational culture* seems to be descriptive, reflecting the way in which members of the organization register the existence of the organization, eluding the estimated appearance. In short, organizational culture projects itself based on the goals and aims of the organization (Cole, 2004). In the organizational culture one cannot find narrow ideational products, private or insular, but a constellation of discovered, negotiated or collectively adopted beliefs, certainties or values. The organizational culture indicates the axiological system of meanings, protocols and methods approved by the members of the organization, a mainly normative system within the organizational entourage, where horizontal and vertical communication, with the internal or external environment, has a decisive role. Between culture and organizational communication there is a direct relationship of interdependence which reflects itself over all kinds of manifestation, functioning and expression of institutional activities.

But what is *communication*? What is its nature? What are the functions of communication? Through a syntagmatic approach, *communication* means the transmission of information or signals, a system of signification. Some authors (Carl Hovland, Irving Janis and Harold Kelley) understand *communication* as "a process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (usually verbal ones) in order to change the behaviour of other individuals (the audience)" (Dinu, 2000). Another definition, given by Louis Forsdale, insists on the nature of entities involved in the communication process as well as on the preponderantly integrating role of the act of communication: "communication is the process by which a system is established, maintained and changed through common signals (shared), acting according to rules" (ibid). In the DeAgostini Encyclopedia of Philosophy and Humanities we find the following definition of communication: "the transmission of information through verbal and

non-verbal instruments" (Drago, M., Boroli, A., Melchiorre, V., (eds). 2000). Gheorghe Ionescu (2001) defines communication as "an interpersonal process of sending and receiving symbols with messages attached to them". As a work definition, we can say that through communication we understand the *process of signification used in a relational and intentional context between parties*.

What is organizational communication? In the spirit of a sociological definition, through organizational communication we describe the transmission of stimuli (verbal, nonverbal and para-verbal) by an entity (living being or machine) and their reception and decoding by another entity in the organizational activity, a process which is possible through the assistance of a set of techniques and tools which enable information sharing. Thus we have a sequence of steps in which the act of communication takes place. This act of communication lies in the existence of a sender and a recipient, the existence of an environment which enables communication and some methods and tools which facilitate information sharing. Finally, the whole process of information transmission from the sender to the recipient occurs within an organizational activity. The major role and the reason organizational communication exists are inextricably linked to improving the organizational activity. Communication performs several major functions within any type of organization. Therefore, an organization that invests time and effort in improving the processes of communication has a great advantage in front of an organization which is deficient in terms of communication. The functions of organizational communication are:

- *The integrative function*: the act of communication, as observed by Forsdale, establishes a system that is maintained and modified by means of certain common shared signals;
- *The informative function*: the act of communication, an act of transmitting information, has a central role in the process of organizational information;
- *The "democratic" function*: the act of communication involves the existence of certain interpersonal relationships where openness and the ability to receive as much information from as many sources are key and vital elements. A good manager is a good communicator and a good listener.

To communicate well is one of the most difficult, sensitive and useful attributes of the managing function. As in the process of

interpersonal communication, one who has something to say should take into account the desired impact and his communicational strategy. When you develop a strategy for organizational communication, the manager, at least in theory, should consider the following aspects (Cornescu, V., Marinescu, P., Curteanu, D., Thomas, S.):

- One-way communication, namely both-ways communication. It refers to a communicative strategy that gives the recipient a chance to send information to the sender on how the delivered message was received.
- The «open door» policy. It is a strategy meant to open channels of communication. It's an opportunity for employees to have a dialogue with their supervisor when various uncertainties arise in the organizational activity. This open door policy should however take into account several aspects, so as not to prove superfluous: the confidence of employees in their superiors; the actual accessibility of the employees to their superiors; the danger of sublimating the chain of command (the hierarchy of authority);
- Verbal or written communication. Here we consider the advantages of each type of communication separately. Situations are assessed as: sending written information to each person or to a group of people; oral transmission of information to each person or to a group of people. One should calculate aspects such as: time available, the importance of the message which will be transmitted, the degree of responsiveness of the recipient, the sender's ability to communicate in writing or orally;
- Using an informal network. Communication through informal means can be advantageous, but carries risks. The advantages derive from lack of rigidity and mechanical character of communication process, which can create an environment in which the sender and receiver communicate beyond bureaucratic restraints. The risks arise if the sender is a poor speaker or the audience does not have an interest in the message reception.

All these functions and explicitly, theoretical processes, in connection with the duties that an effective manager has to fulfil in the organizational life, largely indicate a degree of institutional flexibility and adaptability to the external environment, both of the organization as a real structure and of the management as a leading function. However,

the elements of institutional identity and identification – the organizational culture, the institutional image, communication within the organizations – represent a formative effect comprising specificities and cultural historically civilizing policies which often have characteristics and attributes of a national type.

In Romania, the establishment of communism in the period after the World War II led to a total ignorance of the science of management for period of almost two decades. It was a period of decline in terms of management theory and practice. Managers were appointed directors without a management plan and were forced by the party to strengthen the ideological beliefs of production and productivity due to geopolitical limitations: quality was diminished compared to quantity, assets were characteristics of less efficient constructions in terms of profitability, but great consumers of human resources and energy. In education and research the concerns for management were seriously reduced and, in terms of content, they were strongly marked by the communist doctrine, making them political through the well-known tenets and principles regarding the superiority of the socialist property over the private property, the leading role of the Communist Party, the battle of the classes etc. Most of the concerns were related to the macro-social management based on the principles of the Marxist political economy, while company management is almost non-existing, except for fragile imports from the Soviet Union on the organization of businesses. After 1966, due to the numerous businesses in which great investment effort was made, the need for a rigorous management especially at the microeconomic level was strongly felt. Under the pressure of the need of practice in the context of a certain opening of Romania to the West, several actions in terms of practice, scientific research and education in management and organization are taken. Regarding education, scientific research and management in Romania in the last two decades and a half, until the events of 1989, the following specifications are required:

a) In terms of theory and practice there is a considerable diffusion of management knowledge, in which a large proportion of management concepts and tools from developed countries can be found.

b) The management courses and the scientific research were marked by precepts of the communist doctrine, less in terms of instrumentation and more in the interpretation and use of concepts.

c) The practice of enterprise management has been strongly influenced by its manifestation in an economic system of a communist

type, super-centralized, where the political and administrative-clerical elements often prevailed over economic ones. The restrictions and mechanisms of the amplified communist approach, led from the perspective of Ceausescu to a gradual reduction of functionality and efficiency of management systems used in the Romanian economy in the ninth decade.

d) Between the theory and practice of enterprise management there is a gap which gradually increased, the latter being mostly affected by Ceausescu's communist system.

The year 1990 marked the beginning of radical changes in this field. In the past years, the management education and research almost entirely removed the malformations and limitations of the communist period. Most of the concepts and tools of management at the firm level were reconsidered in the light of the factors and conditions of market economy. Efforts are made to assimilate the latest novelties in management and adapting them to the current conditions of transition to a market economy. On the pragmatic level of company management progress is noticeably slower. Transforming state enterprises in trading companies is not yet accompanied by fundamental changes in their management. The mentality of the management and executive staff is changing slowly and without all the depth required. The effort to build the elements of management is present at appreciable levels in most businesses especially in the executive management. Under the pressure of these factors as under the pressure of market economy, we will see substantial changes in management of companies and businesses in the coming years. These pressures are the key to their survival. The crisis "owner authority" and of "management authority" that manifest amid an economic and mentality crisis (organizational culture) are the main causes that generate the slow progress in the management practice in former state enterprises. The manner and speed of solving these two crises will mark a decisive functionality and profitability of these types of companies. Somewhat better is the management situation of small and medium firms set up by private entrepreneurs. Their strong motivation for action and profit is positively reflected in their management. However, the use of modern management elements is still low. For this group of firms, too substantial progress will be required in the coming years, because there are superior prerequisites represented by the absence of the owner and the management, as well as by their

significantly lower complexity and size. As a consequence of the investigations made, we can identify ten management roles, which can be grouped in three categories, listed below (Lock, (eds.). 2001):

a) The interpersonal roles regarding the way in which the manager interacts with people, the relationships he/she has with others;

b) The informational roles regarding the way in which a manager changes (collects, disseminates) and processes data;

c) The decisional roles that relate to how a manager uses the information in the decision making process.

The issue concerning interpersonal relations and informational roles is essential for our society, which is continuously changing. It values the interaction between managers and employees assigning a regional and national dimension to the manner they have been trained. The pole on "Communication auditing within private companies from the Western part of Romania" was applied between August 27th and October 5th 2014 on a representative sample of 59 small companies from twelve cities. There had been used eight questions which aimed to reveal the managers` and employees` attitude towards communication in the company they come from (T. Rotariu, P. Iluţ, 1997).

Methodology

The objectives of the empirical study (inquiry through questionnaire)

- Validation of inquiry data
- Identifying the managers` and employees` attitude towards communication
- Acknowledging how people relate in small private companies.

The study sample: the questionnaire was sent by regular post to a number of 131 companies along with an explanatory letter about the objectives of this study, 10 sets of questionnaires and a stamped envelope to return the sets by post from the following cities: Arad, Timişoara, Oradea, Reşiţa, Caransebeş, Jimbolia, Salonta, Chişinău-Criş, Sântana, Orşova, Săcueni, Satu-Mare.

Method of data collection: the questionnaire was sent by regular post to a number of 131 companies along with an explanatory letter about the objectives of this study, 10 sets of questionnaires and a

stamped envelope to return the sets by post. Answers returned from 59 companies

The questionnaire (Culic, 2004) contained a number of seven questions regarding knowledge of the following issues:

- How is relating viewed within organizations in terms of communication during decision making process;
- Ways of task transmission;
- The frequency of information and debate meetings in connection with frequent or unusual problems.

The questions were designed as closed questions and the multiple choice tasks referred to auditing relating and communication within organizations. The questionnaires attempted to highlight the manner of communication used in communicating and completion of work tasks.

General results

Throughout this study we have tried to identify the frequent or less frequent use of communication in the decision making process, the manner work tasks are communicated and completed, the relationship between employees in critical situations. We present the results of our study on the dimensions that we consider relevant. The topics are the following: *Appreciation of the manner communication is used in the organization the subject belongs to: The manner of communicating work tasks; Completion of work tasks; The frequency of meetings within the organization; Valorization of subjects within the organization, The tone of direct discussions.*

Appreciation of the manner communication is used in the organization the subject belongs to. The first question was asked to see whether subjects believe that communication is effective in the organization they work in

Fig. no. 1. Effective communication within organizations–subjects` answers (%)
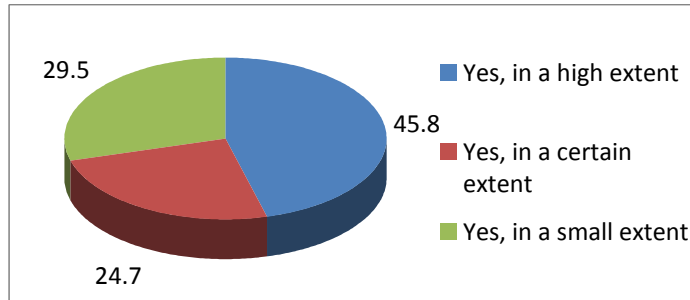
It is worth mentioning the high percentage (70.5%) of respondents who consider that communication is highly effective in their organization. This first question is a control question and by it means we have tried to notice the respondents` positive intentions. However, there are a significant percentage of respondents (29.5%) who admit right from the start that communication is effective in a small extent in the company they belong to.

The manner of communicating work tasks. The second question referred to the manner work tasks are communicated in the organization and 63.3% stated that they are communicated verbally, 24.6% mentioned written communication and only 12.1% referred to mixed strategies.

**Fig. no. 2.** Communicating work tasks in the organization– subjects` answers (%)
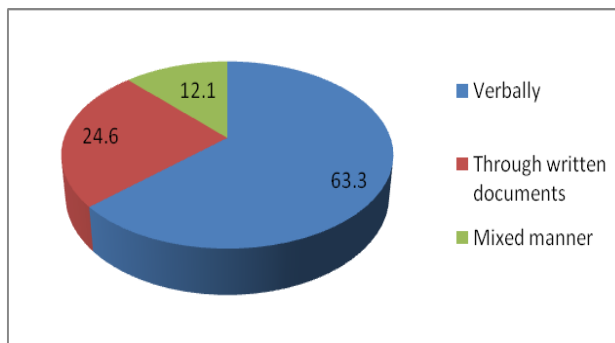
Completion of work tasks. The third question referred to how critical situations emerged from work tasks is managed. Most subjects (54.5%) state that they ask their managers to find solutions when they face a critical situation. 32.4% seek for their work mates` help and 13.1% don't ask for anyone's help. Noticeable is the percentage of those who don't ask for anyone's help and try to solve their problems subjectively or they don't solve them at all, as they please.

The off meetings within the organization. The forth question tried to discover the frequency of periodical information meetings for medium and long-term objectives without referring to on-the-spot ones.

A significant percentage, namely 77.4% of respondents state that information meetings on the future of the company don't have a certain frequency; 22.6% attend meetings at least monthly.

Valorization of subjects within the organization. The fifth question focused on the importance each employee has within the organization she/he belongs to. The answers reveal a less secure attitude towards their work place since 65.5% of respondents don't feel important for their company; 24.3% feel they are important and 10.2% don't know or don't want to answer.

Fig. no. 3. Valorization of subjects within organization – subjects` answers (%)
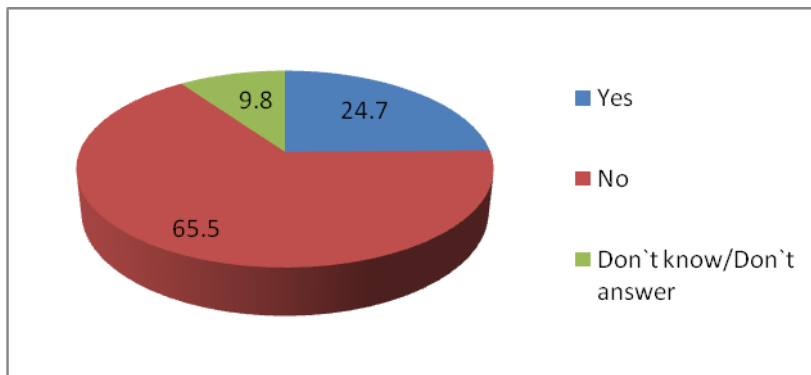
Decision making as mutual process. The sixth question was an attempt to analyze the decision making process within the investigated society. Thus, 18.3% of subjects are questioned about the strategic

decisions which the organization has to take, 78.5% are not questioned and 3.2% don't know or don't want to answer.

The tone of direct discussion. The seventh question attempted to observe the usage of a higher tone towards the employees from time to time. 67.3% admit that higher tone is sometimes used, 28.4% state that higher tone is not used in their organization and 4.3% don't know or don't want to answer.

Conclusion

The conclusions of this study draw out attention on some significant facts related to institutional communication in small companies. Since more than a quarter of employees signaled the lack of effective communication in their companies, the conclusion is that institutional communication faces certain drawbacks. The same attitude is revealed by the fact that most employees seek for their managers` help in completing more difficult work tasks rather than their peers`. Lack of group communication and of horizontal communication reveals poor communication.

The management of societies under our investigation seems mainly authoritarian. The manager benefits from great freedom which is a characteristic of the authoritarian style. Employees are not questioned about their perception of the future of societies on medium and long term; most of them don't feel as part of the organizational structure; they aren't even invited to periodical information meetings; the decision making process is solely the manager's task. Consequently, an eclogue negative culture emerges. Employees run away from responsibilities, only a small percentage are willing to take risks and feel insecure of their work place. The fear of failure is high and authoritarian management style is frequently used; crisis situations require the usage of paternal anachronistic strategies such a higher tone in manager-employee relationship. The managers' attitude can also be the consequence of neo-communist culture from Romania, of guided and normative mentalities which are the characteristic of members of the unique party. They have developed a central economy which is divided today into isolated and insignificant chunks in terms of relating and communication.

To sum up, we can state that a company with less consistent communication or with systematically ignored communication is improper in the current context. Its ability to survive in the

contemporary world can be questioned. We are facing times when an uninformed entity or an uninvolved entity in communication acts is considered marginal, ex-centric and insular. The revaluation of organizational values is a projective strategy whose productivity can be achieved along with the fulfillment of its institutional goals.

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